A FAMILY AFFAIR

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CHAPTER L



the lights of Paddington Station were needed to conquer the damp fog which filled the arched expanse from end to end. The broad platform teemed with the motion and bustle attendant upon the departure of a train. The newspaper boys alone were having a comparatively dull time of it, as the first act of every passenger, upon taking his seat, was to pull up the window and shut out as much tog as possible, declining to let the sash down for any one, except other travelers, who, having paid their fares, claimed their right to seats in the train—a proceeding which, to the first installed passenger, always seems supremely selfish. The new comer, or comers, might choose some other compartment than his!

ment than his!

The moving rack which bears the lamps reached the extreme end of the train. The strong-armyl official below hurled the last crystal gle's to the nimble official who runs along the top of the carriages, and leaps so recklessly from one to another. Deft as an Indian juggler, he caught the gleaming missile, shapped it into the last socket, and sprang incontinently from the already moving train. ncontinently from the already moving train The guard shut the last door, which some-body's carelessness had left open, jumped into his van as it swept by him, and, punctual to the minute, the five o'clock train left London and began its race to Penzance.

In one of the first-class compartments were three passengers, although the railroad com pany would only benefit to the extent of two fares, one of these passengers being a child still young enough to be passed off as a child in arms by all save, perhaps, those tender-minded persons who send conscience money to the chancellor of the exchequer. The two

travelers who augmented the company's rev-enue were a man and a woman.

That they were strangers was evident, and it was also evident that the man was an old it was also evident that the man was an ob-traveler. As soon as the train was in motion, and he felt insured for some time to come against disturbance, he arranged his wrape in the most approved fashion, donned a soft cap, lit a lamp and buried himself in a book. He was a young man; but as he appears in this tale only to disappear, a detailed description would be superflucus. It is enough to know he was a gentleman, well dressed, well-to-do in appearance, and looked quite in his place

n a first-class carriage.

It was a different matter with the woman There was no obvious reason why she should not be able and willing to pay threepence halfpenny instead of a penny a mile for the privilege of being whisked to her destination yet one could imagine a crusty old director, who travels free himself, and is therefore anxious to prevent the company from being defrauded, calling to a guard and suggesting that the woman's ticket should be examined. Or, from purely benevolent reasons, a per-son who knows what mistakes women make son who knows what mistakes women in such matters, might with propriety have remarked: "How comfortable these first-class carriages are." For my part, I should most certainly have done so—not from benevolence, but to save myself, who had paid just fare, from feeling swindled if, at the journey's end, a good-natured ticket collector let off the victim of such a comfortable mis-

Yet there was nothing remarkable in the woman's appearance, except the utter absence of individuality it displayed. For any guid-ance her looks gave, she might have been rich or poor, young or old, beautiful or ugly, noble or simple. Had her traveling comnotice or simple. Had not traveling com-panion been as curious as he was at present indifferent about the matter, he might have at opposite to her from London to the Land's End, yet not have known how to classify her. She was dressed in plain black—and black, like charity and night, covereth and hideth much.
No scrap of bright ribbon, no vestige of color, broke the sombre monotony of her attire, and a thick black veil hid the upper part of her face. She sat like one in a thoughtful frame of mind. Her head was nt forward, and so threw her mouth and in into the shade. Her hands being gloved, it was impossible to know whether she wor



Pressed her lips upon the child's golden

Of the child, a little boy, there was nothing that could be seen except a mass of bright golden hair. The woman had wound a thick woolen shawl around him, and held him close

woolen shawl around him, and held him close to her bosom. He was no annoyance to any one, for, shortly after the train started, he fell fast asleep. Indeed, so inoffensive were his traveling companions, that the gentleman, who had felt somewhat disgusted when a woman and a child entered the compartment, began to hope that, after all, he need not shift his quarters at the first stoppage.

The train sped on through the white fog. It was a fast train, but not so fast as to give itself airs and decline stopping more than twice in a hundred miles. Near Reading the speed slackened. The gentleman with the hook breathed an inward prayer that he might not be disturbed. He did not notice that, as the train drew up at the platform, the woman half rose from her seat, as if her journey was at an end; then, after a mojourney was at an end; then, after a mo-ment's hesitation, reseated herself in her former attitude. The travelers were not

ment's hesitation, reseated herself in her former attitude. The travelers were not disturbed. The train shot on once more. Still the gentleman read his book—still the silent woman held the sleeping child.

In less than half an hour Didcot was reached. The woman, after a quick glance, to assure herself that the reader was intent upon his book, pressed her lips upon tha child's golden head, and kept them there until the train stopped. For a minute or two she remained motionless, then, laying two she remained motionless, then, laying the child on the seat, rose quickly and opened the carriage door. The reader looked up as the cold, damp air rushed into the heated

compartment.

"You have no time to get out," he said;
"we are off in a minute."

If she heard the well-meant caution she paid no heed to it. She made no reply, but, stepping on to the platform, closed the carriage door behind her. The young man shrugged his shoulders, and resumed his interrupted paragraph. It was no business of his if a stupid woman chose to risk missing the train.

self and the eleeping chiid the only tenants of the compartment, he saw that, after all, he was primarily concerned in the matter. In spite of his warning the mother had been left behind, and he was in the unenvisible position of having a child thrown upon his hands until the next stormans.

Although he was a bachelor and one who knew nothing of the ways of children, he scarcely felt justified in pulling the emergency cord. Swindon would be reached in less than an hour—there he would be relieved. So he could do no more than an athematise the cardless mother, and pray that the child's slumbers might be unbroken. Whatever effect the objurgation may have had, he soon saw that his prayer was not to be granted. The child, no doubt missing its protector's embrace, opened its eyes and began to struggle. It would have rolled off the seat had not its enforced guardian, who was a good-natured, kind-hearted young fellow, picked it up and transferred it to his knee. He meant well, although he did not handle it very skillfully. A man must go through a course of painful experiences before he learns how to dandle a child properly. Our friend did his best, but so clumsily that the woolen shawl fell from the child, and disclosed a large ticket sewn on to the dress beneath. On it was written.

did his best, but so clumsily that the woolen shawl fell from the child, and disclosed a large ticket sewn on to the dress beneath. On it was written, "H. Talbert, Esq., Haglewood House, Oakbury, near Blacktown." The young man applauded the good sense which had provided for a contingency which had really come to pass. Then he settled down to do the best he could towards supplying the place of the missing woman until the stoppage at Swindon might bring deliverance.

Swindon at last. Here the ill-used traveler called the guard, and, as that official is of course paid to undertake all sorts of delicate and unforeseen duties, with perfect fairness shifted all further responsibility on to his shoulders, resumed the perusal of his book, and troubled no more about the matter.

The guard, without disputing his position of guardian to all unprotected travelers, hardly knew what to do in the present emergency. The hope that the foolish mother had managed to get into another carriage was dispelled by her not making her appearance. He was also puzzled by the careful way in which the child was labeled. This guard had seen some curious things in his time, and, as the missing woman had left not a scrap of luggage behind, thought it not improbable that the desertion of the child was due to intention, not accident. At first he thought of leaving the tiny derelict at Swindon, on the chance that the mother would arrive by the next train from Didcot. But the more he chance that the mother would arrive by the next train from Didcot. But the more he thought the matter over the more convinced he felt that no mother would arrive by the nex tor any following train. Being himself a family man, and feeling most kindly disposed towards the little golden head which nestled in the most confiding way against his great brown beard, he decided to take the child on to Blacktown, and thence forward it as addressed. He pulled a couple of cushions out of a first-class carriage, put them in one corner of his van, and tucked up little Golden-head as snugly as any mother could have done; so snugly and comfortably that the child at once closed its blue eyes and slept un-

til the train reached Blacktown.

There the guard carried the little fellow into the refreshment room, and leaving him in charge of the pleasant young ladies, went to look for a sober yet speculative man who would take the child to Oakbury on the chance of being paid for his trouble. He even gave this man half a crown—to be repaid out of his prospective reward—for cab hire. Then, after another look at the little waif, who was drinking milk, munching a biscuit, and being made very much of by the refreshment room young ladies, our guard rushed back to his somewhat neglected duties, and was soon spinning down west at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour.

CHAPTER II.

A FAMILY OF POSITION. Be it remembered that Oakbury is not Blacktown. Many of its inhabitants are greatly annoyed when they hear it called a suburb of Blacktown. Oakbury is near the large city, but not of it. Although the fact cannot be ignored that the existence of the many charming country houses which adorn Oakbury is as much due to its contiguity to the dirty thriving town as to its natural. Oakbury is as much due to its configuity to the dirty thriving town as to its natural beauties—and although a certain proportion of those desirable residences has been purchased by Blacktown's successful traders, the most aristocratic inhabitants of Oakbury look with indifference on the good and evil fortunes of the city. They, the aristocratic inhabitants, are useful to Blacktown, not Blacktown to them. They are out of its disreasions and struggles; better still, beyond the range of its taxation. They are of the county, not the town. So they head their letters "Oakbury, Westshire;" and, as a rule, decline intimacy with any Blacktown trader decline intimacy with any Blacktown trader under the rank of banker or merchant prin

Besides Lord Kelston's well known country seat, there must be in the parish of Oakbury some 20 or 25 gentlemen's residences. They cannot be called estates, as the ground at-tached to each varies respectively from three to fifty acres, but not a few of them might lay claim to be described by that well-roundlay claim to be described by that well-rounded phrase, dear to auctioneers and house
agenta, "a country mansion, fit for the occupation and requirements of a family of position." They are not new, speculative, jerrybuilt houses, but good, old-fashioned, solid
affairs. No painted and gilt railings surround
them; thick boundary walls and fine old trees
hide them from the gaze of inquisitive holdday folks. As the country around is very
beautiful and richly timbered; as the prevailing wind which blows across Oakbury comes
straight from the sea, pure and uncontamstraight from the sea, pure and uncontam-inated; as two of the best packs of hounds in England meet within an easy distance and, prejudice notwithstanding, as the con-veniences offered by a large city are so close veniences offered by a large city are so close at hand—it is no wonder that the rector of Cakbury numbers many families of position among his parishioners. If mine were a fam-ily of position, it should most certainly oc-

cupy a pew in that fine, old square-towered After this description it will be easily be lieved that the Oakbury people are somewhat exclusive—by the Oakbury people are meant the inhabitants of the aforesaid twenty houses; the manner of the villagers and other small fry who constitute the residue of the small fry who constitute the residue of the population need not be taken into account. The Oakbury people proper are very particu-lar as to with whom they associate, and the most particular and exclusive of all are two gentlemen named Talbert, the joint owners and occupiers of Hazlewood House.

Their ultra-exclusiveness was but the nut-ural outcome of the position in which they were placed. The fact that their income was derived from money made by their father in timber, tobacco, soap, sugar, or some other large industry of Blacktown—people have already nearly forgotten which it was—must be responsible for the care the Talberts were bound to exercise before they made a new acquaintance.

acquaintance.

Because, you see, in their opinion at least, the taint of trade still clung to them. They were but a generation removed from the actual buying, selling and chaffering. Metaphorically speaking, their own father's hands had been hardened by the timber, stained by the tobacco, lathered by the scap, made sticky by the sugar, according to the particu-lar branch of trade at which he had worked to such advantage. So it was that upon at taining the earliest years of discretion, the sons decided that it was more incumbent sons decided that it was more incumbent upon them than upon the generality of per-sons to be particularly particular in their choice of friends. As they were amiable, right-feeling young men, they looked upon this duty as a sad necessity.

Had they been tempted to swerve from this line of conduct, respect for their father should have kept them steadfast. He had always have kept them steadfast. He had always impressed the great duty upon them. Before the two boys were out of the nursery the great coup which is expected by every sanguine business man came off. Mr. Talbert realized his capital and sold his business. He obtained less for it because he made the stipulation that his name should no longer appear in connection with it. Then, a widower with one daughter and two sons, he bought Hazlewood House, and settled down to drift gradually into good society.

He educated his children by this creed. It is the duty of all people to rise in the world—

is the duty of all people to rise in the world— both in commercial and social circles. Thanks so his exertions and good fortune, the first

haif of the obligation had been discharged. The second rested chiefly with his children. He did not tell them this in definits words, but all the same preached it to them most elequently, and was more than content, and felt that the fruits of his training were showing themselves, when his daughter married Sir Maingay Clauson, a fairly respectable and well-to-do barouet.

This satisfactory alliance gave the Taiberts a lift in the social scale; although, so far as Oakbury was concerned, it was little needed. Mr. Taibert had now been out of business for at least ten years. He was quiet, gentlemanly, and, if not retiring, at least unobtrusive. His wealth was estimated at about three times its correct amount. With these advantages he already found himself well received by the families of position, his neighbors. Content as he no doubt feit on his own account, he, nevertheless, held up their sister's brilliant match as an example to his sons, and taiked so much about the necessity of their choosing their intimates fittingly that it is a marvel the young men did not speedily develop into fools or snobs.

But even now when verging upon middle age they were neither—although any man who would decline your acquaintance or

But even now when verging upon middle age they were neither—although any man who would decline your acquaintance or mine ought, of course, to be one or the other—perhaps both. The worst that could be urged against the Talberts was this: From the very first they had told themselves: "We can find as pleasant and as true friends among the upper ten thousand—among those who do not make their living by barter—as we can among commercial people. Let us therefore only associate with the best. A man has an undoubted right to choose his own friends. Weshall not go out of our way to toady the great, but with our ideas on the subject we can only make associates of those whom we consider the proper class of people. A Duke of Badminton may associate with whomsoever he chooses. He is always, per se, the duke. We are not dukes. Our father made his money in—well, never mind in what. We We are not dukes. Our father made his money in—well, never mind in what. We are not even millionaires. We have enough wealth to live comfortably and like gentlemen, but not enough to roll in. If we go hand in glove with oil, tobacco, sugar, etc., we must, on account of the narrow distance which divides us from the status of commerce, sink to the level, or at least get confounded with those useful, respectable, profitable, but, to us, distanteful commodities. Therefore it behoves us to be fastidious even to a fault."

Who can blame such sentiments as these? Who can blame such sentiments as these.

To my mind there is a kind of shrewd nobility.

Why, with such sensible views on things in Why, with such sensible views on things in general, the two young men did not follow their sister's example and make brillian matches is a matter which has never beer clearly explained. When, after an immacu matches is a matter which has never been clearly explained. When, after an immacu late career, they left Oxford, they were tall well-built, young fellows; moreover carryin, about them an inherent look of distinction So far as the world knew they had no vices So far as the world knew they had no vices, Indeed, in spite of stature, good looks, and broad shoulders, in some quarters they were accounted milksops. Perhaps because, in ad-dition to the polite, even courtly, style which they strove to adopt towards every one, they had many little finnicking, old-maidish ways which were a source of merriment to their contemporaries. Nevertheless, among those who were honored with their friendship, the who were honored with their friendship, the Talberts were not unpopular. With many women—the middle-aged especially—these tall, handsome, refined young men were prime favorites. The fact of the brothers having reached the respective ages of 40 and 41 without having selected helps-meet for them argues that something which makes a marrying man was missing from their natures.

It may be that the pleasure they found in travel prevented their settling down. For many years, either together or singly, the Talberts spent nine months out of the twelve away from home. Their father, who had no wish to see his sons striving in the ruck of humanity for the world's prizes, made them numanty for the works prizes, made them handsome allowances. Greatly to their credit they lived within their incomes, even saved money. These savings they invariably invested in works of art, so that as years went by their acquisitions if united would have formed a valuable and tasteful collection, the units of which had been called force each formed a valuable and tasteful collection, the units of which had been culled from east, west, north and south—so judiciously that the brothers felt sure that, if such a thing were needed, the selection would enhance the reputation they already enjoyed for refined tastes and knowledge of matters artistic.

The brothers were the best of friends. They understood and sympathized with each others' likes, dislikes and weaknesses. Only once in their lives had they quarrelled, but that quarrel had lasted for six years. They shudder now as they look back upon that time.

It was no vulgar dispute, which is made known to all the world and in which mutual friends are expected to take sides. It was only the Talberts themselves who knew that a quarrel existed. To outsiders they see ore absurdly polite to each other than be-

The cause of the quarrel was the interfer-ence of one brother in the other's affairs. They were peculiar men, and very tenacious of the Englishman's duty of minding his own busi-ness. On a certain occasion one of them ness. On a certain occasion one of them fancied a rather delicate matter as much his own business as his brother's. He was mistaken. They did not use high words, because such things were not in their line; but each brother was sadly firm. The upshot was that for six years they only spoke when they met in society.

in society.

At last old Talbert died. His successful At last old Taibert died. His successful daughter had been dead a long time. The old man left Hazlewood House and its content to his sons conjointly. The rest of his fortune be divided into three parts, and "oft in this proportion to each of his children or their children, if any. Then the sons met at Hazle wood House and considered what they should

First of all, as was becoming, they made u First of all, as was becoming, they made up their differences. Very little was said on either side, but it was understood that cordial relations were re-established. At which happy conclusion each man rejoiced greatly—the six years' separation had been a terrible affai -and tacitly registered a vow that for the future his brother's affairs should be his own

distinct, private property.

By this time our friends had grown rathe weary of gadding about. Moreover, it was due to their position that some place should be called their home. For nearly twenty years they had lived in the various capitals of Europe, and they knew that they had con-quered society. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any two men not calchefuls were better any two men, not celebrities, were better known than Horace and Herbert Talbert. S. they resolved to settle down and begin house

they resolved to settle down and begin house keeping on their own account.

They collected their art treasures, and being not traders, but still thorough men of business, in order to save any question arising in the results future, made accept in the results for the resu in the remote future, made exact inventories of their respective belongings, down to the uttermost, smallest and most cracked cup and uttermost, smallest and most cracked cup and saucer. Then they combined their collections and rnade Hazlewood House curiously beau-tiful with paintings, china and bric-a-brac. This done, they settled down into quiet do-mestic life, and kept their house as methodi-cally and carefully, and no doubt a great deal better, than any two old women could have done.

Of course, with their cultivated tasted their general acquirements, their cosmopolita experiences, and the many desirable friend they were known to possess, the Talberts' standing in Oakbury was undeniable. They were a credit to the neighborhood, and might, had they not been too good-hearted to dream of such a proceeding, have snubbed any one of the families of position without dreading, reprisely. It reads howhead the ireading reprisals. If people laughed a heir womanish ways, effeminate proceed ings and domestic economies, they were, nevertheless, always glad to entertain or to be entertained by the Talberts. The latter need not be wondered at. The little dinners at Hazlewood House were the pink of culinary civilization—the crystallization of refined castronomic intelligence.

CHAPTER III CHAPTER III.

AN ARGUMENT AND AN ARRIVAL.

On the night when the down train carried the golden-headed child to Blacktown, the Talberts had dined at home, without company. The two men were still at the table, sipping their claret and smoking eigarettes. They were neither great drinking men nor great smoking men. If such habits are sins, the Talberts might have great on a they were

going for many years and then made atone-ment very easily. It is needless to state that the two brothers were faultlessly dressed in the evening garb of the nineteenth century. It will also be guessed that the dinner table was most tastefully laid out. In spite of the season being midwinter, it was gay with flowers. Quaint antique silver spoons and forks did the duty which is exacted from the florid king's pattern and the ugly fiddle pat-tern abountations of our day. The napery was of the whitest and finest description— the polish on the glass such as to make the most careful housewife or conscientious ser-vant wonder and envy. There is a tale con-nected with the glass.

most careful nousewise or conscientious servant wonder and envy. There is a tale connected with the glass.

Once upon a time a lady who was dining at Hazlewood House asked her hosts, with pardonable curiosity, how they were able to induce their servants to send the decanters and wine glasses to the table in such a glorious state of refulgency. Horace Taibert smiled, and answered with exquisite simplicity:

"We should never think of trusting our glass to the hands of servants. My brother and I see to it ourselves."

Thereupon the lady, who had marriageable sisters, and was no doubt keenly alive to the fact that her hosts were eligible bachelors, said: "It was very sweet of them to take so much trouble;" but her husband, who heard the question and the answer, burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. His was a low, coarse, commonplace mind, utterly unable to divest the ideal from the material. To such a groveling nature the picture of these two six-feet, brawny men washing and rubbing their rare and costly glass seemed intensely comical.

The Taiberts showed no stern of annexe.

comical.

The Talberts showed no signs of annoy ance; they even smiled gravely in response to his vulgar mirth; but Hazlewood House knew

his vulgar mirth; but Hazlewood House knew
that person no more.
But the wretch took his revenge after the
manner of his kind. Unluckily, in spite of
his faults, his position in the county was not
to be despised, and more unluckily he possessed a certain amount of humor of the low
class. He was brutal enough to nickname
our friends the "Tabbies," and, appropriate
or not, the name clung to them, and will
cling for ever and ever. This is but another
proof of how careful a man should be in the
selection of his friends.

proof of how careful a man should be in the selection of his friends.

Although to-night the glass was as radiant as ever, there was at present no one to admire it save its owners and caretakers. By virtue of his year of seniority, Horace Talbert and at the head of the table. Herbert was at his right hand. The two brothers were strangely alike both in figure and face. They were alike both in figure and face. They were brown-haired men, with long, straight noses, caim, serious eyes, rather arched eyebrows, and average foreheads. Each wore a welkept beard and mustache, the beard clipped close, and terminating in a point at the chin—a fashion which suited their long, oval faces remarkably well, and, perhaps, added a kind of old-world courtliness to their general appearance. Their looks may be summed up by saying that the Talberts were men who one felt ought to possess a picture gallery of distinguished ancestors. The absence of such a desirable possession seemed a heartless desirable possession seemed a heartle

freak of .ature.

The room in which the brothers were sitting was furnished with a bold mixture of modern and antique. Where comfort and utility were and antique. Where comfort and unity the first consideration, the modern prevailed; where ornament or decoration had to be supplied, the antique, often the grotesque antique, plied, into requisition. On the high, was called into requisition. On the high carved mantelpiece stood Oriental brons carved mantelpiece stood Oriental bronnse vases with bideous dragons creeping round them, and gaping, grinning kylins, who looked mockingly and fearlessly at the fierce metal monsters. They knew—old china figures know more than people suspect—that the dragons were welded to their vases more irrefragibly than Prometheus to his rock.

Here and there was a plate of rich-colored doissons enumel, a piece of Nankin chips, a

Here and there was a plate of rich-colored doissonne enamel, a piece of Nankin china, a specimen of old brass work, a bracket of real old carved oak, an antique lamp, or some other article dear to the collector. Some half a dozen medium-sized but valuable paintings hung upon the walls. The floor was covered by a sober-hued Persian carpet, and of course a roaring fire filled the grate.

The Talbarts looked year, grave, a grave

a roaring fire filled the grate.

The Tallberts looked very grave—as grave and solemn as Roman fathers in high debate. They were, indeed, discussing a weighty mater. After an interval of silence, Herbert rose and walked to his brother's side. The two looked critically down the table. They went to the bottom and looked up the table. They went to the sides and looked across the table; they even sent glances diagonally

corner to corner.
"It is certainly a great improvement," said



It is certainly a great improvement said Horace. "A great improvement," echoed the other Echo" is the right word—even their voice

were alike.

In a contented frame of mind they resumed neir seats, their claret, and their cigarette

The great improvement was this

For some time past these excellent house keepers had been sorely exercised by the conventional way in which laundressee fold table cloths. They did not like the appearance of cloths. They did not like the appearance of the three long creases on the snowy expanse. They turned their inventive abilities to ac-count, and a week ago walked down to the residence, redolent of soap and hot water, of the woman who did the washing, and startled the poor creature out of her wits by in-sisting upon their table cloths being folded in a new and improved fashion. They even demonstrated their meaning by a practical demonstrated their meaning by a practical experiment, and so impressed the nymph of the wash tub and mangle with the importance they attached to the matter that she had actually managed to learn her lesson well enough for the result of their teaching to

enough for the result of their teaching to give them great satisfaction.

Coffee was brought in, and the two gentle-men were about to leave the dining room, when the Rev. Mr. Mordle was announced. Mr. Mordle was the curate of Oakbury, and always a welcome guest at Hazlewood House. It was an unspoken axiom of the Talberts that the church set the seal of fitness upon her ser-vants, or at least upon her pures expenses. the church set the seal of fitness upon her servants, or at least upon her upper servants. Organ blowers, parish clerks and pew openers were the lower servants—so, all things being equal, a clergyman could always break through the exclusiveness which reigned at Hazlewood House. Mr. Mordle was clever in his way, full of talk, and of course knew every in and out of the parish, in the administration to the wants of which he must have found the Tailberts a great assistance. All istration to the wants of which he must have found the Talberts a great assistance. All great men have their weaknesses perhaps their friendship for Mr. Mordle was the Tal-berts weakness. But then they dearly loved having a finger in the parochial pie, leaving out of the question the fact that they liked the curate, and in the kindness of their hearts pitied his ioneliness. So he often dropped in like this, uninvited, and no doubt felt the

privilege to be a great honor.

On Mr. Mordle's side, he could thoroughly appreciate humor, the more so when its existnce was quite unsuspected by the solate unnorist. To him the study of Horace and Herbert was a matter of keen and enduring

delight.

They rose and greeted him. "Excuse me," said Horace rather nervously, "did—"

"Yes, I did," answered the curate briskly, "I rubbed them—I scrubbed them—my feet

feet red not. I could dance a minuet on your tablecloth without solling it."

The redundancy of the answer set their minds at rest. The bugbear of their domestic lives was persons entering their rooms with out having first wiped their shoes as every Christian gentleman should. The hall door was so heavily armed with mats and scrapers that such an omission seemed an impossibility. Yet sometimes it did occur, and its effects were terrible—almost tragic.

Yet sometimes it did occur, and its effects were terrible—almost tragic.

Horsoe rang for more claret; Herbert passed his cigarette case, and the three men chatted for a while on various subjects.

Presently said Horace with sad decision:

"Ann Jenkins came to us the day before yesterday. She told a piteous tale. We gave her five shillings."

"Very good of you." said the curste: "she

yesterday. She told a piteous tale. We gave her five shillings."
"Very good of you," said the curate; "she has a large family—nine, I think."
"Yes, but we are sorry now that we gave the money. We are sure she is not a careful, thrifty woman."
The curate's eyes twinkled. He know Ann Jenkins well—too well.
"Careful and thrifty people wouldn't want your half-crowns. But how did you find out her true character!"
Mr. Mordie expected to hear's mournful account of a domiciliary visit to Ann Jenkins, and a dissertation upon the various and almost original stages of untidiness in which his friends had found her numerous progeny. But the truth was better than he had bargained for. gained for.
"We walked behind her across the field this

morning," said Horace, with grave regret.
"When she got over the stile we saw she had
on two odd stockings, a black one and a gray
one—or blue and gray, I am not certain
which."

"Blue and gray," said Herbert, "I noticed "Her tastes, like yours," said the curate, "may be cultured enough to avoid Philistinic

uniformity."

"Oh dear, no," said Herbert, 'errously.

"We argue in this way. The woman has two pairs of stockings—"
"I doubt it," said the curate. "But nover mind—go on." His friends were surpassing

themselves!

"She has two pairs—one gray, the other blue or black. She has worn one stocking into holes. Instead of sitting down and darning it, like a decent body, she simply puts on one of the other pair."

"Why doesn't she put on the other pair."
"Why doesn't she put on the other pair
altogether?" asked Mr. Mordle.
"Because," said Horace, triumphantly, "one dated condition; so her conduct is doubly bad.

As I said, she is not a deserving woman."

"Granting your premises," said Mr. Mordle,
"your argument is not illogical. Your
reasoning appears sound, your deductions

correct. But—"
The curate was preparing for a delicious battle on this subject, well worn or otherwise, of Ann Jenkins' hose: He meant to learn why one stocking of either pair should wear out before its fellow, and many other fanciful

out before its fellow, and many other fanciful combinations were forming themselves in his subtle brain, when the interest in the mended or unmended stockings was extinguished by the entrance of the Talberta' irreproachable-looking man-servant. He informed his mas-ters that the man had brought the child. "What man? What child?" asked Horace. "Do you expect a man or a child, Herbert? "Certainly not. What do you mean, Whit-taker?"

"A railway man has brought a child, sir. He says it is to be left here."
"There must be some s'upid mistake."
"No doubt, sir," said Whittaker, respect fully, but showing that his opinion quite coin

ded with his masters."
"Where is the man!" asked Horace.
"In the hall, sir." "Did he wipe his shoes?" asked Herbert, in

"Certainly, sir; I insisted upon his doing so." "Certainly, sir; I insisted upon his doing so."
"We had better see the stupid man and set
the matter right," said Horace. "Excuse us
for a moment, Mr. Mordie."
The two tall men walked into the hall, leav-

ing Mr. Mordie to chuckle at his case. Hazle-wood House was certainly a most interesting wood House was certainly a most interesting place this evening. It was lucky for the curate that he indulged in his merriment with his face turned from the door as in a minute the respectable Whittakes entered the room. That functionary was most tenacious that due respect should be shown to his masters. Most probably the look of vivid amusement on Mr. Mordle's features would, had he seen it, have made an enemy for life of the faithful Whittaker.

"Mr. Talbert and Mr. Herbert would be glad if you would step out for a moment, sir."

glad if you would step out for a moment, sir."

Thereupon Mr. Mordle went into the hall and saw a most comical sight—the solemnity of the actors concerned not being the least comical part of it. Standing sheepishly on the door mat, or rather on one of the legion of door mats, was a stolid-faced porter in his uniform of brown fustian, velveteen, or whatever they call the stuff. On either side of the massive, oblong hall-table stood one of the Talberts, while between them, on the the Taiberts, while between them, on the table itself, was a child with a mass of tum-bled, flossy, golden hair streaming down from under a natty little cap. Horace and Her-bert, each armed with his horn-rimmed eye-

bert, each armed with his horn-rimmed ayeglass, and with looks of utter consternation
and bewilderment upon their faces, were
bending down and inspecting the child.

To Mr. Mordle's imaginative mind, the
group suggested a picture he had once seen
of the Brobdignagians taking stock of Gulliver; nor could the picture have been in any
way spoiled when he himself, a tall man,
went to one end of the table, while Whittaker, another tall man, stood at a becoming
distance from the other end, and joined in
the scrutiny of the diminutive stranger.

"This is a most extraordinary thing!"
said Horace. "The child is sent by rail
addressed here."

Mr. Mordle read the ticket: "H. Talbert,
Esq., Hazlewood House, Oakbury, near Blacktown."

"Where did you say it came from?" saked

town."
"Where did you say it came from?" asked
Herbert, turning to the stolid-faced porter.
"Let us hear all about it again."

"Don't expect any visitors, I suppose?" away again," said H race, turning to the por-ter. The man gaped.
"What am I to do with it, sir!" he asked.

"Lost parcels office," suggested Mr. Mordle quietly. Whittaker gave him a reproachful look. The matter was too serious a one for jest, "Cut the label off," was the curate's next piece of advice. "There may be a letter under They took it off. The label was a piece of writing paper gummed on to a plain card which had been torn or cut irregularly. No letter was concealed beneath it. Then they searched the pockets of the child's little coat,

but found nothing. Their perplexity increased.

"I'll wish you good evening, gentlemen,"
said the porter. "Cab was three and six." "I'll wish you good evening, gentlemen," said the porter. "Cab was three and six." The "Tabbies" were on the horns of a dilemma. The eyes which could detect the discrepancy in the unfortunate Mrs. Jenkins' stockings were able to see that the baby was well, even very well, clad. It was just possible that a letter had miscarried—possible that some one was coming to Hazlewood House without invitation or notice—that she had really missed the train at Didcot; that she would arrive in the course of an hour or two and explain matters. The safest plan was to keep the child for a while.

would arrive in the course of an hour or two and explain matters. The safest plan was to keep the child for a while.

Having settled this, Horace fished five shillings out of his pocket and sent the porter away happy. Thereupon Herbert produced a half crown which he handed to his brother, who pocketed it without comment and as a matter of course. They were not miserly men, but made a point of being just and exact in their dealings with one another down to the uttermost farthing. Much annoyance would be saved if all men were the same as the Talberts with respect to small sums. Nevertheless, this rigid adjustment of matters pecuniary was a trait in their characters which greatly tickled Mr. Mordle.

All the while the little boy, with fat sturdy

cak hall table. The lantern of many colored glass over his head threw rich, warm tints on his sunny hair. He seemed in no way shy or terrified; indeed, if any fault could be found in his bearing, it was that his manners were more familiar than such a short acquaintance justified. As the dignified brothers once more justified. As the dignified brothers once more bent over him to resume their examination, he seized Mr. Herbert's watch chain in his chubby fist and laughed delightedly—a laugh which Mr. Mordle echoed. He had long looked for a suitable excuse for expressing his feelwhich Mr. Mordie echoed. He had long looked for a mitable excuse for expressing his feelings in this way. The situation was so funny. An unknown child foisted upon his friends at this hour of the night! No dirty beggar's brat, but a pretty, well-dressed little boy, old enough to possess a row of tiny white teeth, but not, it seemed, old enough to give any explanation of this unwarrantable intrusion. The child had such large, bright bine eyes, such wonderful golden hair, such fearless and confident ways, that Herbert, who was fond of children, patted the bright head and pulled out his watch that the little rascal might hear it tick; while Mordie slipped back to the dining room and returned with a couple of unwholesome macaroons.

unwholesome macaroons.

"Nearest way to a child's heart through stomach," he said, as the youngster deshis first friend for the sake of the sweets.

Horace eyed these advances disconter But what is to be done? he said. Just then the muffled strains of a

"I should think," said the curate, " had better take Miss Clauson's advice on

CHAPTER IV.

BEATRICE'S PROPOSAL

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In describing Hazlewood House and its belongings, no mention has been made of Miss Clauson, for this reason—her position in that well-regulated establishment was, as yet, scarcely defined. She was neither mistress nor guest. She was, in short, the only daughter—indeed, the only surviving result of that brilliant marriage made by Miss Talbert when she allied herself with Sir Maingay Clauson, Bart.

There is no reason for enlarging upon the admirable way in which Lady Clauson filled the position which her own merits had gained, or to which fate had assigned her. Socially and domestically—in the outward as well as the inward life—she was all a baronet's wife should be—all save that she presented her husband with no heir to his titles and estates. This was a sad omission, but, for the sake of her many other good qualities, Sir Maingay overlooked it, and made her a very good husband, as husbands go. When Lady Clauson died, some twelve years after the birth of the daughter who lived, Sir Maingay wept copiously. He even opened his Bible—the first time for many years—and by the aid of "Cruden's Concordance," looked out a text appropriate to her many virtues. Moreover, for her sake, or his own, he remained single for five long years. Then he went the way of all middle-aged, titled, wife-bereft fiesh, and married again.

Beatrice Clauson, just about to leave school, a romantic young lady, whose head for the present was, however, only occupied by pretty, filial dreams of looking after her father, ministering to his comforts, ruling his house, and generally doing the best she could to fift the place of her dead mother, found herself, without a word of warning, presented to a new mother; one, moreover, but four years older than herse f. It was a crushing blow! It was a girl's first lesson in the vanity and unstability of mundane expectations.

She ought, of course, to have anticipated it; but she was young, and like most young recole. considered her middle-aged father.

unstability of mundane expectations.

She ought, of course, to have anticipated it; but she was young, and like most young people, considered her middle-aged father abnormally old and staid. Besides, abe could remember her own mother well enough, and remembered also Sir Maingay's sincere grief when death claimed his wife. She remembered the way in which the weeping man threw his arms around herself, and told her that she was now his ALL—his treasured memento of his wife—his one tie to life. Recalling all this, she was sanguine enough to

memento of his wife—his one tie to life. Re-calling all this, she was sanguine enough to fancy that memory was even more vivid, that grief had graven its lines deeper with her father than with herself. So the bolt came from the bluest of the blue! At seventeen Beatrice Clauson was still a spoiled child. All distracted widowers, until they marry again, spoil an only child; there-fore, if only on salutary grounds, a second alliance is to be recommended. We will, then, take it for granted that at the time of Sir Maingay's second marriage, Miss Clauson Sir Maingay's second marriage, Miss Clauson was spoiled. Moreover, we may at least sus-pect that she was both impetuous and stub-born, headstrong and romantic; also, in her own way, as proud as Lucifer. The second Lady Clauson was a beauty, and

nothing more. Her family was what is called respectable—a term, the signification of which no man or woman has as yet been able exactly to define. Like the Bi

terpret it as we choose.

When the inforced meeting between Lady Clauson and her stepdaughter took place, the young lady, by means of those signs and tokens, the masoury of which women alone fully comprehend, showed the state of her mind so clearly that war to the knife was then and there declared.

And civil war in families—baronets or otherwise—is a deplorable thing; doubly deplerable for the neutral parties, who lack the excitement of the intersecine combat. For a while Sir Maingay's life was anything but a happy one.

It matters little who was most to blame—
the girl for her unreasonableness and stubborn spirit, and want of resignation to the
inevitable—Lady Clauson for retaliating
with all an injured weman's pettiness
and spite—Sir Maingay for the thoroughly
man-like conduct in letting things drift.
They did drift with a vengeance! The
breach between the two ladies soon became
too enormous to be bridged over by any
lamily diplematic engineering.

The skirmishes between the belligerents are
not worth noticing. The battle-royal was

"Where did you say it came from?" asked Herbert, turning to the stolid-faced porter. "Let us hear all about it again."

"Guard of five o'clock down, gentlemen; he says child was left in first-class carriage. Mother got out at Didcot, and missed the train or didn't come back. Guard told me to get cab and bring the child here. Said I'd be paid well for my trouble. Cab was three and six, gentlemen."

"There must be some mistake. What are we to do?" asked the brothers.

"Don't expect any visitors, I suppose?"

The skirmishes between the belligerents are not worth noticing. The battle-royal was root worth noticing. an, at least, drive a horse to the water, ever f you can't make him drink; but you dar

sked the curate.

"None whatever. You must take the child so hand a refractory young woman into the sort hand a refractory young woman into the present of a gracious soversign.

"Lost parcels office," suggested Mr. Mordle usely. Whittaker gave him a reproachful to the presented usages of society, may not have been far wrong when she dequietly. Whittaker gave him a reproachful to be presented usages of society, may not have been far wrong when she dequietly. fused to be presented, was—well, a mon

fused to be presented, was—well, a mon-strosity!"

Bir Maingay began to wish his ancestors and not separated themselves from the Roman Catholic communion. He could have ent his daughter to a nunnery. But then, is sadly reflected, she wouldn't have gone at any price. If put there by force, the Pro-lectant league would soon have her out, and serhaps take her round the country spouting. The only thing the worried baronet could hink of was to send for his rebel, and ask wer advice as to the best means of dimoning.

aer advice as to the best means of disposing of her troublesome self.

When alone with her father Beatrice always When alone with her father Beatrice always schaved prettily. She was very fond of him, although the remembrance of the tears, the exit, the distracted vows, when contrasted with his second marriage for nothing but good looks, made her look upon him with a little contempt. She did not know that man is so gregarious a creature that it is not meet for him to live alone. She heard his remarks at these was him her creating on the in silence, then gave him her opinion on the

"I don't want to be a nuisance to you, paps. I am eighteen now—too old to go back to school. It's nonsense, of course, to say I should like to earn my own living, because when I come of age I shall have some money.

when I come of age I shall have some money.
May I go and live at Fairholme!"
Fairholme was Sir Maingay's seldom-used seat in one of the southern counties.

"But you can't live there alone," he said.

"Yes, I could. Mrs. Williams could take care of me. I shall be happy enough."

"My dear girl, why not be reasonable and make friends with Lady Clauson! Then we could all go abroad together."

Lady Clauson, who was by no means a fool,

To Physicians

We do not find fault, reproach or con-demn the practice of any regular physi-cian—this is not our mission—but we do claim that if he were to add PERUNA to claim that if he were to add Peruna to his prescriptions, as directed in our book on the "Ills of Life," (and furnished gratuitously by all druggists), he would cure all his patients.

Mr. Henry C. Reynolds, Ironton, Lawrence County, Ohio, writes: "My wife has been sorely distressed for many years, ler disease or disease and the western.

has been sorely distressed for many years, Her disease or diseases and the symptoms of them have been so varied that an attempt to describe them would be more than I feel able to undertake. I have paid over a thousand (1,000) dollars for doctors and medicines for her, without any satisfactory results. We read so much about your Praguna that I was forced to try it. She has now taken five houles. try it. She has now taken five bottles; they have done her more good than all the doctors and medicine that she has ev-

er made use of. Peruna is certainly a God-send to humanity."
Mrs. O. L. Gregory, Las Vegas, San Migvel County, New Mexico, writes: "I think Peruna and Manalin saved my

life."

Mrs. Cora Engel, First House on Laselle street, near Rich, Columbus, Ohio, says. "It affords me much pleasure to state to you the benefit I have received from your PRRUNA. I had been troubled with kidney complaint and dizziness in my head for eighteen years. I tried different kinds of patent medicines, and consulted a number of physicians, but received no benefit whatever. About three weeks no benefit whatever. About three weeks ago I commenced taking Peruna. I began to get better before I had taken half gan to get better before I had taken half a bottle. The dizziness has disappeared, and the other affection has so much improved that I am positive, after I will have taken another bottle, I will be entirely well. I feel like a different person already. A number of my friends have used it, and they think it is a wonderful well and they think it is a wonderful when have used it. remedy. My husband says it is one of the best medicines for a cough that be

ever took."

A. W. Blackburn, Wooster, O., writes:
"Several weeks ago a man came to no.
all broken down, terribly nervous, stomach without any power to digest food.
Had tried four doctors; none did him any
good. Asked me to do something for
him, I recommended Manalin. He
told me to-day that he has been taking it
regularly, and is now almost well. Said
he would sound the praises of Manalin
far and near."

had by time time found out that ene needed comething more than mere good looks to go down, or go up, in the society her heart longed for. She had, therefore, made up he mind to become a traveled woman, and had arranged that Sir Manaya should take her than a variety of foreign atries. The proport years, and her ing, or of god adim i e me one else to write k, describing ped to take the world by store "I can't go abroad with you. A Peatrice." I shall be miserable myself and make you

presented and come out and all that sort of

"If ever I do get married," said Beatrice irily, "I will be presented as Lady Clauson was, on my marriage," Sir Maingay's cheek reddened, He was Sir Maingay's cheek reddened. He was much hurt by the sarcasm. Poor old King Lear found a fitting simile for an ungrateful child, but the sharpness of a sarcastic child is more painful than a whole jawful of serpent's teeth. He did not reply; but the worthy barenet was at his wits' end. What could be do with this girl? He had very few relations—he cared for none of them. Old Mr. Talbert, of Hazlewood House, was a confirmed invalid; Horace and Herbert were men without homes or wives. Sir Maingay was willing enough that Beatrice should remain in England. He had suffered much during the last few months from the dissensions of his wife and daughter. But where

sions of his wife and daughter. But where to bestow Beatrice?

At last he remembered an aunt of his own who lived in quiet retirement in one of the suburbs of London. It was of course absurd for Beatrice to think of living at Fair solme, in a half-closed house with a houseleeper and one or two servants. So it was arranged that her great-aunt should take her while blir Maingay and Lady Clauson were on the Con-tinent. So to Mrs. Erskine's she went, and, as that lady was very old, very deaf, and saw no company, it may be presumed that Mira Clauson had scarcely a merry time of it ducing her father's absence—an absence which



BEATRICE CLAUSON. After a while Sir Maingay almost forgot be had a daughter. The Clausons testled down to continental life for an indefinite time. Lady Clauson knew she was inprov-ing herself, and moreover, that Sir Maingay was raving enough money to refurcish the town house from top to bettom whenever they did return to England. In the course of the four years spent abroad, Lady Clauson rectified her predecessor's size of emission, and gave her devoted husband two flose boybables. In the revived delights of paternity -a paternity which is so especially dear to middle age. Sir Maingay thought little of the troublesome, obstinate girl he had left in England. His wife and his boys all but turned her out of his heart. So here was Beatrice in the extraordinary position of being a baronet's daughter with scarcely a a friend in the world.

At last the Clausons returned to England.

Whether her ladyship wrote har back or not is a matter of uncertainty; a your it was to rejoining the family circle. I'm father and his wife found her greatly changed. She was quieter, more reserved, more amenable to reason. It seemed to Sir Maingay that the to reason. It seemed to Sir Maingay that ele had passed her time at Mrs. Ersking an study. The learning she had acquired almost fright-ened the baronet; but he was gind to see also had grown into a beautiful weman, and to he felt quite proud of his neglected daughter, and hoped that things would for the future run smoothly. His hopes were vain. This time there was no doubt as to with whom the fault lay. A beauty like Lady Clauson could not endure the constant presence of a younger, fresher

the constant presence of a younger, fresher and even more beautiful beauty. She was also jealous at the way in which her own children took to Beatrice. Besides, she had never dren took to Beatrice. Beades, she had hever forgiven 'he girl. Relations som grew strained, and towards the end of the year Beatrice wrote to her uncles, and asked if they would give her a home.

To be CONTINUED.

There is considerable barbed fence There is considerable barbed fence in Maricopa county, Arizona, and the wast flocks of wild ducks which frequent the valley often fly low, and, striking the barbed fence, become impaled thereon. It is said that tons of ducks are gathered daily by the boys from the fences and sent to market.